



FOR RELEASE:

February 13, 2024

Media Contact:

Mia Tripi

414-390-5500

cedarburg@muellercommunications.com

CITY, TOWN PLACE FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNDING REFERENDUM ON APRIL BALLOT

Voters to consider increase in property tax levies to fund additional staff

CEDARBURG, Wis. – The City and Town of Cedarburg have authorized referendums that, if approved, would allow the municipalities to exceed state-imposed levy limits and increase funding for the Cedarburg Fire Department. The referendum questions will appear on ballots on Tuesday, April 2, 2024.

"In the last decade, the Cedarburg Fire Department has seen a nearly 47% increase in the number of calls for service and a 17% decrease in the number of volunteers available to respond to calls," said Cedarburg Fire Department Chief Jeff Vahsholtz. "Because our staffing is not keeping pace with the demand for our services, it is becoming difficult to provide the high-quality services our community deserves. Additional funding will ensure we are able to respond to emergencies in the Cedarburg community."

To begin mitigating these challenges, as of January 1, 2024, the Cedarburg Fire Department moved from a volunteer to a paid-on-call model – compensating part-time staff who respond to emergencies and helping improve retention and recruitment efforts.

If approved by referendum, additional funds would improve emergency response reliability and enable changes recommended by the Joint City and Town of Cedarburg Fire and EMS Committee, including funding to:

- Add 10 additional full-time Firefighter-Paramedics;
- Maintain two (2) full-time Firefighter-Paramedics currently funded using ARPA dollars, which will run out in 2024; and
- Adjust the Fire Chief position to a full-time role, helping ensure CFD has consistent leadership to manage the growing public safety needs in the City and Town of Cedarburg.

Additional full-time staff will bolster the Cedarburg Fire Department and ensure that qualified professionals are available at any time of the day or night to respond to emergencies.

The inclusion of additional Firefighter-Paramedics will increase the level of service the Department will be able to provide, boosting CFD from an AEMT-level agency to a Paramedic level. This will increase the emergency medical skills and types of medications available to support patients.

CEDARBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT REFERENDUMS TO TAKE PLACE IN APRIL, CONT.

The referendum will ask voters in the City and Town of Cedarburg whether or not they support the addition of \$2,015,658 to the CFD annual operating budget. Based on the Department's funding formula, the City's portion of this additional budget would be approximately \$1,292,302 and the Town's portion would be approximately \$723,356.

In the City of Cedarburg, this would result in a property tax increase of approximately \$67.82 per \$100,000 in assessed property value (\$264.51 for a median home assessed at \$390,000). In the Town of Cedarburg, this would result in a property tax increase of approximately \$57.08 per \$100,000 in assessed property value (\$276.86 for a median home assessed at \$485,000).

Community Survey Demonstrates Broad Support for Referendum Question

In December, CFD worked with Community Perceptions, an independent Wisconsin-based research firm with expertise in conducting community surveys, to administer and analyze a survey designed to help municipal leaders determine the best path forward. That survey demonstrated:

- 82% of respondents believe it is very important to have high-quality emergency services; and
- A significant majority of respondents from both the City (70%) and Town of Cedarburg (69%) favor pursuing a referendum to fund the proposed staffing plan.

In November, CFD released an options assessment detailing a need to improve emergency response reliability by funding additional full-time personnel, supporting volunteers, and raising emergency medical services to a paramedic level. The options assessment was presented to municipal elected officials and staff at meetings in November and is included in its entirety on the Fire Department's website.

Additional information about the referendum will be shared through direct mail, during information sessions and online at <https://www.cedarburgfiredept.com/>

ABOUT CEDARBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Cedarburg Fire Department (CFD) was founded in 1866 by a group of early Cedarburg residents who served as the first volunteers on the crew. The Department's approximately 30-square-mile service area includes more than 7,200 residences, three nursing homes, eight senior living facilities and commercial properties valued at more than \$227 million total across both municipalities.

It operates out of two fire stations and serves a population of more than 18,000 residents in both the City of Cedarburg and the Town of Cedarburg, providing fire suppression, fire inspection, rescue, and AEMT-level emergency medical services, in addition to providing public safety education to the community. As part of its commitment to providing rescue services, the Cedarburg Fire Department supports its own dive team, one of just three in Ozaukee County.

Learn more at www.cedarburgfiredept.com

###